Chapter 2: 1800-1860

Towards a state system of education

Industrialisation: the need for mass education

The industrial revolution

In 1751 the population of the British mainland stood at seven million. By 1821 - after seventy years of industrial revolution - it had reached...
Industrialisation: the need for mass education
The industrial revolution
New types of school
  Sunday schools
  Schools of industry
  Monitorial schools
  Infant schools
  Elementary schools
  Technical education
Hostility to mass education
Parliamentary grants for school buildings
The involvement of the churches

The education of the upper classes
Preparatory schools
Resistance to change
The beginnings of change
A broader curriculum
Girls' education

Special educational needs
Provision for
  - the blind
  - the deaf
  - the physically handicapped
  - the mentally defective

Higher education
1825 Universities Act

References

fourteen million, and by 1871 it would reach twenty-six million. The rapid expansion in the overall population was matched by increases in the proportion of people who lived in towns and cities, and in the proportion of the population who were children.

England's industrial revolution began in the second half of the 18th century. At first, new agricultural techniques freed workers from the land and made it possible to feed a large non-agricultural population.

In the 19th century, relative world peace, the availability of money, coal and iron ore, and the invention of the steam engine, all combined to facilitate the construction of factories for the mass production of goods. The factory system increased the division and specialisation of labour and resulted in large numbers of people moving to the new industrial cities, especially in the midlands and the north. It also resulted in low wages, slum housing and the use of child labour.

Thus the industrial revolution exacerbated the problems of a society 'divided into those with land or capital or profession and those with no wealth, no possessions and no privileges' (Benn and Chitty 1996:2).

Perhaps the first sign that the state was beginning to acknowledge some responsibility for the conditions in which the poor - and particularly poor children - lived, was Peel's Factory Act of 1802: 'An Act for the preservation of the health and morals of apprentices and others employed in cotton and other mills and cotton and other factories'. The Act required an employer to provide instruction in reading, writing and arithmetic during at least the first four years of the seven years of apprenticeship. Such secular instruction was to be part of the twelve hours of daily occupation beginning not earlier than 6am and ending not later than 9pm. Many of the apprentices were young pauper children who were frequently brought from distant workhouses to labour in the cotton mills.

Alongside the upheaval of industrialisation, the process of democratisation got under way with the Representation of the People Act 1832 (commonly known as the Reform Act), which gave a million people the right to vote.

This dramatic social, political and economic transformation served to reveal the utter inadequacy of England's educational provision. A number of reports highlighted the deficiencies and called for more and better schools. One such report looked at 12,000 parishes in 1816, and found that 3,500 had no school, 3,000 had endowed schools of varying quality, and 5,500 had unendowed schools of even more variable quality.

New types of school

To fill the gaps, and to provide for England's newly-industrialised and (partly) enfranchised society, various types of school began to be established to offer some basic education to the masses.

Sunday schools
The Sunday schools taught the poor - both children and adults - to read the Bible, but not to do writing or arithmetic or any of the 'more dangerous subjects' which were 'less necessary or even harmful' (Williams 1961:136).

**Schools of industry**

'Schools of industry' were set up to provide the poor with manual training and elementary instruction. Such a school opened at Kendal in the Lake District in 1799. According to the *Records of the Society for Bettering the Conditions of the Poor* (III. 300-312):

the children were taught reading and writing, geography and religion. Thirty of the older girls were employed in knitting, sewing, spinning and housework, and 36 younger girls were employed in knitting only. The older boys were taught shoemaking, and the younger boys prepared machinery for carding wool. The older girls assisted in preparing breakfast, which was provided in the school at a small weekly charge. They were also taught laundry work. The staff consisted of one schoolmaster, two teachers of spinning and knitting, and one teacher for shoemaking. (Hadow 1926:3-4)

In 1846 the Committee of Council on Education, under Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth, its Secretary from 1839 to 1849, began making grants to day schools of industry towards the provision of gardens, trade workshops, kitchens and wash-houses, and for gratuities to the masters who taught boys gardening and crafts and to the mistresses who gave 'satisfactory instruction in domestic economy' (Hadow 1926:9).

**Monitorial schools**

In the rival systems of Lancaster and Bell, as in the Sunday schools, the teaching was based on the Bible, but using a new method which Bell called 'the steam engine of the moral world' (quoted in Williams 1961:136). (Incidentally, Young and Hancock (1956:830) ascribe this quotation to Brougham, of whom more below).

Bell's method involved the use of monitors and standard repetitive exercises so that one master could teach hundreds of children at the same time in one room. It was the industrialisation of the teaching process.

The curriculum in these monitorial schools was at first largely similar to that of the schools of industry - the 'three Rs' (reading, writing and 'rithmetic) plus practical activities such as cobbaging, tailoring, gardening, simple agricultural operations for boys, and spinning, sewing, knitting, lace-making and baking for girls.

A small group of thinkers led by Bentham and Place, impressed by developments in Scotland, Prussia, France and Holland, sought to establish higher grade elementary schools and monitorial secondary schools to meet the needs of the class immediately above the very poor. Unfortunately, Bentham's 'Chrestomathic Scheme' for the education of 7 to 14 year olds, devised around 1816, proved too encyclopaedic a course of studies, and the proposal met with little...
support.

Kay-Shuttleworth recognised the shortcomings of the monitorial schools and made an important contribution to the general development of primary education by introducing a modified form of the pupil teacher system, so preparing the way for a large supply of adult teachers (see Hadow 1931:7).

**Infant schools**

The first infant school was established by Robert Owen (1771-1858) in New Lanark, Scotland, in 1816. Children were admitted at the age of two and cared for while their parents were at work in the local cotton mills. The instruction of children under six was to consist of 'whatever might be supposed useful that they could understand, and much attention was devoted to singing, dancing, and playing' (Hadow 1931:3).

Infant schools were thus at first partly 'minding schools' for young children in industrial areas; but they also sought to promote the children's physical well-being and to offer opportunities for their moral and social training and to provide some elementary instruction in the 3Rs, so that the children could make more rapid progress when they entered the monitorial school.

In 1818 a group led by the radical Whig politician Henry Brougham and the historian and philosopher James Mill (both Scots) established an infant school on Owen's lines in London, and imported a teacher from New Lanark.

Owen's ideas were developed by Samuel Wilderspin (1792-1866), who worked out a system of infant education which left its mark for many years on the curriculum and buildings of elementary schools. He had 'a mistaken zeal for the initiation of children at too early an age to formal instruction' (Hadow 1931:3).

The Home and Colonial Institution (later known as the Home and Colonial Society) was founded in 1836 to establish infant schools and to train teachers for them. The principal promoter of the Society, Revd Charles Mayo (1792-1846), was much influenced by the work of Pestalozzi, the Swiss educational reformer.

**Elementary schools**

The question of how to organise children above the age of six in elementary schools was first addressed in Great Britain by David Stow (1793-1864), who began his work in Glasgow around 1824. He founded the Glasgow Normal School and became a significant figure in the development of educational theory and practice. He believed that in primary education the living voice was more important than the printed page, so he laid great stress on oral class teaching.

He also conceived a graded system of elementary education, with an initiatory department for children of two or three to six years of age, and a juvenile department for children between the ages of six and 14, itself divided into junior and senior divisions. He described this scheme in his 1836 book *Training System of Education for the Moral and Intellectual Elevation of Youth, especially in large Towns and*
Manufacturing Villages.

There were several practical objections to his system in the first half of the 19th century: it was costly; the school life of most children was short; and teachers could not be obtained in sufficient numbers. As a result, few schools were established using Stow’s system, and the usual arrangement was an infant department for children up to the age of six, and a senior department for 6-12 year olds.

The small 'all-age' school for children between 6 and 12 often developed into a school with three or more classes, in which one teacher took a section for an oral lesson, while assistant teachers took other sections for written work in arithmetic and for exercises in reading, dictation and composition. This system became common after about 1856 (see Hadow 1931:7).

Impressed by the practical work he had seen in Swiss schools, Kay-Shuttleworth attempted to introduce more practical instruction into England's elementary schools. In the Regulations for the education of pupil teachers and stipendiary monitors, which he submitted to the Privy Council in December 1846, it was provided that pupil teachers at the end of their fourth year should be examined by the Inspector 'in the first steps in mensuration with practical illustrations, and in the elements of land surveying and levelling'. The women pupil-teachers in every year of their course were expected 'to show increased skill as seamstresses, and teachers of sewing, knitting, etc' (see Hadow 1926:8-9).

However, Kay-Shuttleworth’s efforts had little effect on the great mass of elementary schools, most of which were set up and run by university graduates with literary and scientific interests. They wanted more culture in the schools, and there was a noticeable tendency to emphasise the superiority of a general non-manual education over any sort of vocational training such as that given in the schools of industry.

There was another reason why vocational training took second place to academic studies: it was soon discovered that any effective form of practical instruction cost much more than the teaching of the three Rs. Moreover, it was almost impossible to arrange for such instruction in large classes taught by monitors. Owing to the growth of commerce and sea-borne trade in the mid 19th century there was a great demand for clerks, and in schools where advanced work for older pupils was attempted it was found that it was much easier to train them for clerical work than for manual occupations. Matthew Arnold, writing about 1858, considered that the humane studies in the upper classes of the best elementary schools were by far the most interesting part of the curriculum.

Technical education

Because the industrial revolution had given Britain a head start in world trade, the government saw no reason why the state should be involved in the training of industrial recruits. So modernisation of the old apprenticeship system was left to voluntary agencies. Several Mechanics' Institutes opened in the mid 1820s and by 1850 there were 610 such Institutes in England and 12 in Wales, with a total membership of over 600,000.
The state did establish a 'Normal School of Design' in London in 1837 and made some annual grants for the maintenance of some provincial schools of design from 1841 onwards, but otherwise it did nothing until the Great Exhibition of 1851 drew public attention to the lack of facilities for technical education in England compared with those provided in various continental countries.

So in 1852 a Department of Practical Art was created under the Board of Trade. In 1856 this was moved into the Education Department as the Department of Science and Art, and in 1859 it began setting examinations - for both teachers and students - in branches of science related to industrial occupations (see Spens 1938:51).

**Hostility to mass education**

All the schools described above were established by individuals and groups who believed in - and campaigned for - mass education. But they found themselves up against vicious hostility to the very idea of educating the poor. One Justice of the Peace, for example, opined in 1807 that:

> It is doubtless desirable that the poor should be generally instructed in reading, if it were only for the best of purposes - that they may read the Scriptures. As to writing and arithmetic, it may be apprehended that such a degree of knowledge would produce in them a disrelish for the laborious occupations of life. (quoted in Williams 1961:135)

And when the Parochial Schools Bill of 1807 was debated in the Commons, Tory MP Davies Giddy warned the House that:

> However specious in theory the project might be of giving education to the labouring classes of the poor, it would, in effect, be found to be prejudicial to their morals and happiness; it would teach them to despise their lot in life, instead of making them good servants in agriculture and other laborious employments to which their rank in society had destined them; instead of teaching them the virtue of subordination, it would render them factious and refractory, as is evident in the manufacturing counties; it would enable them to read seditious pamphlets, vicious books and publications against Christianity; it would render them insolent to their superiors; and, in a few years, the result would be that the legislature would find it necessary to direct the strong arm of power towards them and to furnish the executive magistrates with more vigorous powers than are now in force. Besides, if this Bill were to pass into law, it would go to burthen the country with a most enormous and incalculable expense, and to load the industrious orders with still heavier imposts. (Hansard, House of Commons, Vol. 9, Col. 798, 13 June 1807, quoted in Chitty 2007:15-16)

In some respects things were even worse than in previous centuries.
Although the poor had never been educated *en masse*, there had been parishes where exceptional provision was made, and a few able boys from poor homes had even been offered university places. But by the start of the 19th century, education was organised, like English society as a whole, on a more rigid class basis. The result was a new kind of class-determined education. Higher education became a virtual monopoly, excluding the new working class, and the idea of universal education, except within the narrow limits of 'moral rescue', was widely opposed as a matter of principle. (Williams 1961:136)

But the calls for more and better education were increasing in number and volume. They were endorsed by school inspectors. In reports for 1847 (quoted in Hadow 1926:8), for example, two inspectors commented:

I adhere, however, to the opinion which I formerly expressed, and which I now repeat, having had the advantage of conversing with many of the most experienced supporters of education upon the subject, that in most country districts it would be advisable to have a preparatory school in each village, and a completely organised school, under the charge of able teachers, in a central locality. (Rev FC Cook)

and

I think it very desirable that district schools should be formed for three, four, or five parishes, wherein, under an efficient master with apprentices, a superior education may be provided not only for the elder children of labourers, but also for such of the farmers, small tradesmen, and mechanics, as may choose to avail themselves of it. (Rev HW Bellairs)

**Parliamentary grants for school buildings**

Some financial assistance to schools from the local rates had been permitted in a few places in the 18th century. Now, from around 1830, national funds began to be made available for school building.

Five School Sites Acts were passed between 1841 and 1852, designed to facilitate the purchase of land for school buildings and to make 'Parliamentary Grants for the Education of the Poor'.

Downloads:

- *School Sites Act 1841* (pdf text 324kb)
- *School Sites Act 1844* (pdf text 136kb)
- *School Sites Act 1849* (pdf text 128kb)
- *School Sites Act 1851* (pdf text 60kb)
- *School Sites Act 1852* (pdf text 72kb)

These were followed by the 1855 School Grants Act (14 August 1855) which sought 'to render more secure the Conditions upon which
Money is advanced out of the Parliamentary Grant for the Purposes of Education'. It stated that, where Parliament had made grants for land, or for the construction, enlargement or repair of school buildings, they were not to be sold, exchanged or mortgaged without the written consent of the Secretary of State for the Home Department.

- Download the School Grants Act 1855 (pdf text 76kb).

Thus, despite the hostility to universal education, new schools were being built and school attendance was rising. In 1816, 875,000 of the country's 1.5m children 'attended a school of some kind for some period' (Williams 1961:136). By 1835 the figure was 1.45m out of 1.75m. If this sounds fairly impressive, it should be noted that by 1835 the average duration of school attendance was just one year.

By 1851 the average length of school attendance had risen to two years, and in 1861 an estimated 2.5m children out of 2.75m received some form of schooling, 'though still of very mixed quality and with the majority leaving before they were eleven' (Williams 1961:137).

The involvement of the churches

The Church of England regarded education for all children as desirable. This was not a unanimously held view, however - influential taxpayers and those who benefited from employing children were less enthusiastic. But despite the doubters, the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church (which, for obvious reasons, became generally known as the National Society) was founded in 1811. Its aim was to provide a school in every parish. Local clergy 'often took on this initiative wholeheartedly' (Gates 2005:16), with or without the benefit of special donations. 'The inclusion of the fourth "R" of religion, alongside the other three (reading, writing and 'rithmetic), was simply assumed as right. It took the form of the Bible, catechism and prayer book services' (Gates 2005:16).

Other Christians, along with liberal Anglicans and some Roman Catholics and Jews, preferred a less denominational approach and in 1814 founded the British and Foreign School Society for the Education of the Labouring and Manufacturing Classes of Society of
Every Religious Persuasion (the British and Foreign School Society). Its schools drew on the pioneering work of the Quaker Joseph Lancaster. They taught Scripture and general Christian principles in a non-denominational form.

A third group, who wanted religion kept out of schools altogether, formed a third organisation, the Central Society of Education, in 1836. Unfortunately, they represented a tiny minority, and 'it was the tussling between the other two [the National Society and the British and Foreign School Society] that delayed the introduction of a fully comprehensive school system funded by public taxation' (Gates 2005:16).

The government was unwilling to intervene or take the lead for fear of appearing to promote one group over the other, so in 1833 it began giving annual grants towards school provision to both the National Society and the British and Foreign School Society. From 1846 similar grants were given to Baptists and Congregationalists (subject to an agreement about the reading of Scripture), from 1847 to Wesleyan Methodists and the Catholic Poor School Committee, and in 1853 to the Manchester Jewish community (subject to an agreement about the reading of at least part of the Bible).

The Church of England resisted the introduction of a 'conscience clause' which would have allowed children of Dissenters to attend its schools without fear of religious offence, and a ruling that only the Authorised Version of the Bible was acceptable delayed the granting of aid to RC schools. The 1861 Newcastle Report (of which more in the next chapter) noted the problems these rulings caused in areas where there was only one school.

The education of the upper classes

Preparatory schools

The upper classes did not, of course, send their sons to elementary schools, but to private preparatory schools, where they were prepared for education at the great English public schools.

The term 'preparatory' was never legally established but has been invested by tradition with a very precise and important meaning which is still current and influential. In one sense indeed it is nearer to the developmental than to the elementary tradition, for it does at least take some account of sequence rather than of social status as a principle of differentiation. But at the same time it implies in name what 'junior elementary' often implied in fact, that the education of younger children is mainly to be conceived in terms of preparation for the later stages of education rather than as a stage in its own right. (Blyth 1965:30)

The preparatory tradition became embedded in the upper and middle classes of English society. Its aim was (and still is) the education of
younger children for what follows. 'For prep-school boys indeed, the next phase in the life cycle was often regarded as its zenith, with regrettable results' (Blyth 1965:34).

**Resistance to change**

Just as there was resistance to the very idea of educating England's lower classes, there was resistance, too, to the notion that the curriculum in schools for the middle and upper classes should be modernised. Protests at the restricted curriculum offered in these schools were mostly ignored or defeated.

In 1805, for example, Lord Eldon accepted Dr Johnson's definition of a grammar school as a school in which the learned languages were grammatically taught, and ruled in the Court of Chancery that it was illegal for the governors of Leeds Grammar School to spend endowment funds on teaching modern and commercial subjects. His judgement was upheld by subsequent decisions, and this state of affairs continued until the passing of the 1840 Grammar School Act (7 August 1840).

The 'great' public schools were the least willing to adapt and modernise. The following description of attitudes to the curriculum at these schools in the 1820s was given by James Pillans (1778-1864), Professor of Humanity at Edinburgh University, who was for some time a private tutor at Eton. In *Contributions to the Cause of Education* (1856:271) he wrote:

> In the great schools of England - Eton, Westminster, Winchester and Harrow, where the majority of English youth who receive a liberal and high professional education are brought up - the course of instruction has for ages been confined so exclusively to Greek and Latin that most of the pupils quit them not only ignorant of, but with a considerable disrelish and contempt for, every branch of literature and scientific equipment, except the dead languages. It may be said that there are in the immediate neighbourhood of the College, teachers of Mathematics, Writing, French and other accomplishments to whom parents have the option of sending their sons. But as these masters are extra-scholastic - mere appendages, not an integral part of the establishment - and as neither they nor the branches of knowledge they proffer to teach are recognised in the scheme of school business, it requires but little acquaintance with the nature of boys to be aware, that the disrespect in which teachers so situated are uniformly held extends, in young minds, to the subjects taught and is apt to create a rooted dislike to a kind of instruction which they look upon as a work of supererogation. And this, we venture to say, is all but the universal feeling at Eton. (quoted in Spens 1938:18)

Pressure of public opinion persuaded some of the old local foundations to find ways of enlarging the curriculum, sometimes by
charging fees for the non-classical subjects. For example, a report by
the head master of Newcastle-on-Tyne Free Grammar School in 1838
shows that the school was teaching, in addition to Classics, 'French,
Writing, English Grammar and Composition, History and
Chronology, Geography and the use of the globes, practical and
mental Arithmetic, Euclid, Algebra, Trigonometry, Analytical
Geometry and Mechanics, etc.' French was taught without extra
charge; the fees for instruction in the other subjects were £1 a quarter.

Concerns about the traditional curriculum were reflected in the
publications of the Central Society of Education. In Education
Reform, published in 1837, Thomas Wyse (1791-1862) gave a vivid
picture of the state of secondary education at the time:

In no country is the strife between the new and the old
educations more vehement - the education which deals
with mind as spirit and that which deals with it as matter.
In no country are there greater anomalies - greater
differences not merely in the means, but in the ends of
education ... it runs through the entire system. (quoted in
Spens 1938:18-19)

He went on:

If we find in the country and town schools little
preparation for occupations, still less for the future
agriculturalist or mechanic, we find in the Grammar
Schools much greater defects. The middle class in all its
sections, except the more learned professions, finds no
instruction which can suit its special middle class wants.
They are fed with the dry husks of ancient learning when
they should be taking sound and substantial food from
the great treasury of modern discovery. The applications
of chemical and mechanical science to everyday wants -
such a study of history as will show the progress of
civilisation - and such a knowledge of public economy in
the large sense of the term as will guard them against the
delusions of political fanatics and knaves, and lead to a
due understanding of their position in society, are all
subjects worth as much labour and enquiry to that great
body, as a little Latin learnt in a very imperfect manner,
with some scraps of Greek to boot - the usual stunted
course of most of our Grammar Schools. (quoted in
Spens 1938:19)

The beginnings of change

But changes began to be made, led by head masters like Samuel
Butler at Shrewsbury from 1798 to 1836 and Thomas Arnold at
Rugby from 1828 to 1841.

At Shrewsbury, English, geography, algebra, Euclid and English
history formed part of the ordinary work of the Fifth and Sixth Forms.
Butler attached much importance to private reading, and he also
introduced promotion by merit and periodical school examinations for
the upper forms.
Arnold's main aim was 'the re-establishment of social purpose, the education of Christian gentlemen' (Williams 1961:137). In the Sixth Form, the Classics were still the foundation of the curriculum, but French and mathematics (including arithmetic, algebra, geometry, and trigonometry), English, German, ancient history and modern European history were also taught.

Arnold's work at Rugby (which was featured in Thomas Hughes' 1857 novel Tom Brown's Schooldays) restored the prestige of the large boarding schools among the middle class, who welcomed the social and moral training which they offered. The demand for more boarding schools of the public school type coincided with the rapid increase in the wealth of the middle classes and the construction of the railways.

As a result, a considerable number of new boarding schools were established, the most famous of which were Cheltenham College (1841), Marlborough College (1843), Rossall School (1844), Radley College (1847), Wellington College (1853), Epsom College (1855), Bradfield College, (1859), Haileybury (1862), Clifton College (1862), Malvern School (1863) and Bath College (1867). These institutions, described in the Report of the Public Schools Commission (1864) as proprietary schools, were designed to make boarding education accessible to those sections of the middle class who found difficulty in paying the fees of the older and more expensive public schools.

To the same end, in 1848 Canon Nathaniel Woodard (1811-1891) founded the Woodard Society to provide Anglican boarding schools for the various sections of the middle class: Lancing for the gentry, Hurstpierpoint for the upper middle class and Ardingly for the lower middle class.

This resurgence of interest in boarding schools slowed the development of proprietary day schools, which had begun to be established in the 1820s. Among the most important day schools of this type were the Liverpool Institute (1825), King's College School (1829), University College School (1830), Blackheath Proprietary School (1831), the City of London School (1837) and Liverpool College (1840).

Nonconformists had been admitted to the teaching profession since 1779 but were still excluded from the universities and the public schools. So in 1807 Congregationalists founded Mill Hill School, organised on public school lines but with a broader curriculum. In addition to classics, the school course comprised mathematics, including algebra, Euclid and trigonometry; French, taught by a Frenchman; lectures on natural and experimental philosophy; drawing, taught by 'an artist of respectability'; and history, English reading, elocution and ancient and modern geography.

The Society of Friends (Quakers) also established a number of schools in the first half of the 19th century. In these, special attention was paid to the study of English and particularly to oral reading and composition, and the pupils were frequently required to write descriptions of excursions, lectures and other incidents of school life. Considerable attention was also given to natural history, elementary natural science, geography and manual work of various kinds (see
These new schools were not restricted by the statutes of founders and in most cases had no endowments, so they were obliged - and were able - to respond to popular needs and offer an education which was partly liberal but also vocational (see Spens 1938:24).

A broader curriculum

By the 1840s England had around 700 private grammar schools and more than 2,000 endowed schools. The old grammar schools still largely served the upper classes and obtained their pupils from the preparatory schools. Both they and the endowed schools had, as we have seen, successfully resisted attempts to reform their curricula, despite the great advances that had been made in science and the development of rich vernacular literatures in the countries of western Europe.

But change was now being forced upon them in a variety of ways, including the establishment of the Civil Service Commission and the Board of Military Education, which compelled the schools to give greater priority to mathematics and modern languages.

Cheltenham College, for example, had from its opening in 1841 a Modern (or Military and Civil) Department intended primarily to prepare boys for the entrance examinations for Woolwich and Sandhurst, for appointments in government offices, for engineering, or for commercial life. The main study was mathematics, there was some Latin but no Greek, natural science was introduced, and greater stress was laid on modern languages. The curriculum, even for the lower forms, was surprisingly broad, and included mathematics, Latin, English, history, geography, French, German, Hindustani, physical science, drawing, fortification and surveying.

A recognition of the importance of English and aesthetic subjects, especially music and art, was a feature of the curriculum at Uppingham School, where Edward Thring was head master from 1853 to 1887. Classics, English composition and grammar, Scripture, history and geography were taught in the morning; in the afternoon the boys studied music and one or two optional subjects such as French, German, chemistry, carpentry, turning and drawing. Thring was one of the first heads to give music a prominent place in the curriculum. He made attendance at singing classes and music lessons compulsory and subject to the same discipline as any regular school subject. He also attached great importance to systematic physical exercises and to hobbies; the Uppingham gymnasium, opened in 1859, was the first of its kind in any English public school, as were also the workshops, laboratories, school garden, and aviary.

By the 1850s, then, the curriculum - in both private and endowed schools - was changing, partly because of parental pressure and partly in response to the requirements of various external examinations, such as the London Matriculation Examination, the examinations for the Indian Civil Service (first held in 1855), the Oxford Local Examinations (from 1857), the Cambridge Local Examinations (from 1858), and the Examinations of the College of Preceptors, which was
established in 1846 for the promotion of middle class education and for the training and certification of teachers.

A number of writers were also urging curriculum reform.

In a series of articles written between 1854 and 1859 (and issued in book form in 1859) Herbert Spencer attacked the existing curriculum. He argued that natural science should form the basis of formal education and strongly advocated systematic physical training.

A volume of *Essays on a Liberal Education*, published in 1867 under the editorship of Dean Farrar, then assistant master at Harrow, also reflected the widespread dissatisfaction with the conventional curriculum. Among the contributors, Professor Henry Sidgwick and Canon JM Wilson (science master at Rugby) stressed the importance of science.

And in his *Essays*, published in the 1860s and 70s, Professor TH Huxley advocated a curriculum consisting of natural science, the theory of morals and of political and social life, history and geography, English literature and translations of the greatest foreign writers, English composition, drawing, and either music or painting.

**Girls' education**

For many centuries, a girl's education - if she was lucky enough to have one at all - consisted of religious instruction, reading, writing and grammar, and the occasional homecraft such as spinning. In the 18th century French, Italian, music and drawing were sometimes added in the few boarding schools open to girls.

Early in the 19th century, Sydney Smith wrote:

> The system of female education as it now stands aims only at embellishing a few years of life which are, in themselves, so full of grace and happiness that they hardly want it, and then leaves the rest a miserable prey to idle insignificance. (quoted in Hadow 1923:22)

At the beginning of the Victorian era, then, the education of women was scanty, superficial and incoherent. Many girls were instructed by ill-trained private governesses; and the numerous private schools for girls, which were mostly boarding schools, were probably even worse than those described in 1868 in the report of the Schools Inquiry Commission, where the ordinary course of instruction for girls was characterised as being very narrow and unscientific.

In her autobiography, Miss Cobbe described one of the fashionable girls' schools in Brighton in about 1850, where the fees were £500 a year. The girls worked all day: during the one hour's walk in the open air they recited French, German and Italian verbs, and for the remainder of the day they were reading or reciting one of these languages or practising accomplishments. Music, dancing and 'calisthenics' (strengthening and beautifying exercises) were highly valued subjects; writing and arithmetic were not. The main aim was social display.
In Macmillan's Magazine for October 1866, Anne Clough described the curriculum in ordinary girls' schools for the lower middle class: 'A few dry facts are taught, but the life and spirit are too often left out and there is a monotony in girls' education which is very dulling to the intellect' (quoted in Hadow 1923:23).

'In general it may safely be said that the traditional education for girls up to about 1845 accentuated the differences between the sexes' (Hadow 1923:23).

A movement for better education for girls and women began in 1843 with the foundation of the Governesses' Benevolent Institution, which aimed to provide a system of examinations and certificates for governesses.

This led to the foundation of Queen's College in Harley Street in 1848, where the leaders of the movement, such as the Revd FD Maurice, adopted the traditional boys' curriculum and endeavoured to hand it on to the women they taught. In a volume of introductory lectures delivered at Queen's College and published in 1849, the list of subjects is given as English, French, German, Latin, Italian, History, Geography, Natural Philosophy, Methods of Teaching, Theology, Vocal Music, Harmony, Fine Arts, and Mathematics. Each subject was taught by a specialist, who explained its purpose and principles.

Another significant development was the establishment in 1849 of the first higher education college for women in the UK. The Ladies' College in London's Bedford Square was founded by social reformer and anti-slavery campaigner Elizabeth Jesser Reid. After her death in 1866 it became known as Bedford College and in 1900 it became part of the University of London.

Two notable pioneers in the campaign for girls' education were Miss Beale and Miss Buss, both of whom studied at Queen's College. Miss Beale was appointed as mistress in the Clergy Daughters' School at Casterton in 1857, where she was expected to teach Scripture, mathematics, geography, English literature and composition, French, German, Latin, and Italian. A year later she moved to Cheltenham Ladies' College (which had opened in 1853), where she reorganised the school. Miss Buss founded North London Collegiate School in 1850. Both gave evidence to the Schools Inquiry Commission. Miss Buss told the Commissioners: 'I am sure girls can learn anything they are taught in an interesting manner and for which they have a motive to work' (quoted in Hadow 1923:24-5).

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**Special educational needs**

*Note: The information in this section is taken from chapter 2 (pages 8-9) of the 1978 Warnock Report *Special Educational Needs*, which itself was largely based on DG Pritchard's 1963 book *Education and the Handicapped 1760-1960.*
Provision for the blind

The first school for the blind in Great Britain was the 'School of Instruction for the Indigent Blind' established by Henry Dannett in Liverpool in 1791. It offered training in music and manual crafts for children and adults of both sexes. There was no education as such: child labour was the rule and pupils were taught to earn a living.

The Liverpool foundation was quickly followed by other private ventures: the Asylum for the Industrious Blind at Edinburgh (1793), the Asylum for the Blind at Bristol (1793), the School for the Indigent Blind in London (1800) and the Asylum and School for the Indigent Blind at Norwich (1805). As at Liverpool, these institutions were solely concerned to provide vocational training for future employment and relied on the profits from their workshops.

Schools whose courses included a genuinely educational element began to be established in the 1830s. The Yorkshire School for the Blind (1835) taught arithmetic, reading and writing as part of vocational training; while at the school established by the London Society for Teaching the Blind to Read (1838) a general education was seen as the foundation for subsequent training in manual skills. The Society later opened branches in Exeter and Nottingham.

The General Institution for the Blind at Birmingham (1847) combined industrial training with a broad curriculum in general subjects; and after at first concentrating on training, Henshaw's Blind Asylum at Manchester (1838) eventually developed a thriving school with educational objectives.

The first senior school for the blind was the College for the Blind Sons of Gentlemen founded at Worcester in 1866.

Despite these developments, by 1870 there were still only a dozen or so institutions for the blind: most of these were training centres and only a small proportion of the blind benefited from them.

Provision for the deaf

Thomas Braidwood's Academy for the Deaf and Dumb, opened in Edinburgh in the early 1760s, was the first school for the deaf in Great Britain. It taught a handful of selected paying pupils to speak and read.

In 1783 the Academy moved to London, where in 1792 the first English school for the deaf opened with six children under the direction of Braidwood's nephew. This Asylum for the Support and Education of the Deaf and Dumb Children of the Poor flourished: in 1809 it moved to larger buildings and later opened a branch at Margate.

In 1814 an Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb opened in Edgbaston with Thomas Braidwood's grandson (also Thomas) as the teacher.

More schools for the deaf followed: at Liverpool, Manchester, Exeter
and Doncaster in the 1820s; at Aberystwyth in 1847; and in Edinburgh (Donaldson's Hospital) in 1851.

These early institutions for the deaf - like those for the blind - were protective places: there was little or no contact with the outside world. The education they provided was limited, and despite the training they offered, many of their inmates subsequently failed to find employment and ended up begging.

- For more on the history of the education of the deaf, see the British Deaf History Society website.

Provision for the physically handicapped

The first separate educational provision for physically handicapped children was the Cripples Home and Industrial School for Girls, founded at Marylebone in 1851. A Home for Crippled Boys followed at Kensington in 1865.

Like the schools for the blind and deaf, the priority of these institutions was to teach a trade: any education provided was rudimentary. The children came mainly from poor homes and contributed to their own support by making goods for sale. Little further was done for the physically handicapped until 1890.

Provision for the mentally defective

Before the middle of the 19th century so-called mentally defective children who required custodial care were placed in workhouses and infirmaries. The first specific provision made for them was the Asylum for Idiots established at Highgate in 1847. Like the institutions for the blind and deaf, the Asylum took adults as well as children.

By 1870 there were five asylums, only three of which claimed to provide education. Admission was generally by election or payment. In the same year the newly created Metropolitan Asylum Board established all-age asylums at Caterham, Leavesden and Hampstead. The children were later separated from the adults, and those who were considered to be educable followed a programme of simple manual work and formal teaching. The staff were untrained and classes were very large.

In Scotland, the first establishment for the education of 'imbeciles' was set up at Baldovan in Dundee in 1852 and later became Strathmartine Hospital. An institution for 'defectives' was founded later in Edinburgh: it transferred to a site in Larbert in 1863 and later became the Royal Scottish National Hospital. The Lunacy (Scotland) Act of 1862 recognised the needs of the mentally handicapped and authorised the granting of licences to charitable institutions established for the care and training of imbecile children.
Higher education

The institution of public examinations, in Cambridge from the 18th century and in Oxford from the early 19th, forced the two universities to improve the quality of their teaching and, as a result, they began to recover their prestige.

By the 1830s the exam system for university entrance was firmly established. While this had the effect of raising academic standards within the institutions, it also further restricted university entrance to those from a narrow social class.

1825 Universities Act

But it wasn't just the quality of their teaching they needed to improve, it was also, apparently, the behaviour of their students. Thus the 1825 Universities Act (5 July 1825) authorised the Chancellors of Oxford and Cambridge to appoint Constables to help maintain 'peace and good order' in the university precincts.

In Oxford, prostitution was apparently also a problem. Section III of the Act declared that:

every common Prostitute and Night-walker, found wandering in any Public Walk, Street, or Highway, within the Precincts of the said University of Oxford, and not giving a satisfactory Account of herself, shall be deemed an idle and disorderly Person ... and shall and may be apprehended and dealt with accordingly.

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